

This dissertation examines the ways in which phraseological units are actualized in the private correspondence of three prominent twentieth-century Polish writers: Wisława Szymborska, Zbigniew Herbert, and Czesław Miłosz. The primary aim of the study is to fill a gap in Polish phraseological research by investigating the use, modification, and functions of phraseological units in epistolary discourse.

The research material consists of fifteen published collections of correspondence exchanged by the selected authors. A total of 2,414 phraseological units were identified, including 1,348 canonical uses and 1,066 innovative realizations. The highest number of innovative phraseological modifications was found in Herbert's correspondence.

The analysis is based on the methodology of structural linguistics and relies on comparisons with major Polish phraseological dictionaries, particularly Stanisław Skorupka's Dictionary of Polish Phraseology. The study examines both idioms and phrasemes while excluding phraseological markers with limited stylistic value.

The dissertation is composed of five chapters. The first chapter outlines the theoretical foundations of phraseology, while the second discusses the development and methodology of epistolography. The third chapter presents the biographies of the selected writers and the characteristics of their correspondence. The fourth chapter analyses the canonical use of phraseological units and their stylistic and communicative functions, whereas the fifth focuses on innovative phraseological modifications, including substitutions, reductions, expansions, contaminations, mixed innovations, and paraphrases.

The findings demonstrate that private correspondence constitutes a valuable source for phraseological research and reveal the creative ways in which established phraseological units are adapted to express emotions, shape interpersonal relations, and fulfil aesthetic, expressive, and stylistic functions. The study also contributes to a better understanding of the specificity of phraseological usage in epistolary discourse in comparison with other text types, such as poetry, prose, journalism, and advertising.